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Viewing cable 07LIMA994, SCENESETTER FOR PERU MOD WAGNER'S VISIT TO

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07LIMA994	2007-03-23 17:41	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Lima

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [KICC](#) [PREL](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR PERU MOD WAGNER'S VISIT TO
WASHINGTON

Classified By: POL David C. Brooks, for Reasons 1.4 (c,d)

Summary:

11. (C) Peruvian Defense Minister Wagner is sending a deliberate message by visiting the U.S. before any other region outside of South America. Wagner is pursuing an ambitious defense reform agenda, which includes developing higher levels of professionalization, building a joint operational rapid response capability, and fighting corruption. He also wants to redefine Peru's military mission away from supposed threats from neighbors toward meeting the menace posed by transnational crime and terrorism. Wagner is under no illusion that the United States can remedy the Peruvian military's serious deficiencies in resources and equipment, but he will reiterate his request for Excess Defense Articles to improve his navy's ability interdict narcotics along Peru's northern coast. More broadly, both Wagner and Peruvian President Garcia see GOP and USG national security interests as closely aligned and desire to strengthen mil-mil relations, which lag behind other areas in our bilateral agenda. As proof of this intention, we expect Wagner to reiterate Peru's willingness to explore offering post-Manta facilities for U.S. counternarcotics flights in the region.

End Summary.

The Message of the Visit

12. (C) Minister Wagner told Ambassador Struble in late 2006 that he was holding off on offers to travel outside of South America until he could visit Washington. In A March 21 conversation with the Ambassador, Wagner reiterated that he prizes Secretary Gates' invitation because it is an opportunity to manifest Peru's priority interest in military-military relations with the United States. While Wagner's predecessors under the Toledo government were similarly well disposed towards the United States, the attitude of the armed forces presents a mixed picture. We've been close to the Peruvian navy for decades, but the Army and to a lesser extent the Air Force continue to labor under the legacy of dictator Velasco Alvarado (1968-74). General Velasco, who turned to the Soviet Union for equipment and training, viewed U.S. political, economic and military influence within the hemisphere as strongly limiting Peru's freedom of action; he sought to limit our influence without actually rupturing the relationship. Former colonel Ollanta Humala, who narrowly lost last year's Presidential election, reflects the old Velasquista nationalist mindset; Humala was reputed to enjoy the support of 75 percent of the Army below the rank of Colonel.

Minister Wagner's Target Areas

13. (C) Minister Wagner has identified four key target areas for reform of his Armed Forces. They are:

- Correctly Identifying the threat and mission: In his first speech to the troops last August and consistently since, Wagner has argued that Peru does not face a military threat from any of its neighbors. He has identified the real menace as violations of Peruvian sovereignty by transnational criminal and terrorist groups. Wagner has also urged his Armed Forces to increase its capacity to participate in international peacekeeping operations.

- Professionalization: Like much of Peru's stock of dated Soviet-made equipment, a good deal of what passes for military education in Peru's Armed Forces needs significant

updating. Generations of officers remain inculcated with dated ideas from the Velasco era which portray U.S. influence in this hemisphere as a threat to Peru's national interests. Training programs and exchange opportunities will help us counter these notions, and begin introducing new, modern and realistic thinking (particularly vis a vis the U.S.) into

Peruvian military education. The MOD has asked us for information on U.S. Military education to assist him and his team in their reform efforts.

- Rapid Response, Joint-Operational Capability: Since September 2006, the MOD has been promoting the idea of forming a multi-service, multi-capable military force that could respond to a variety of threats at a moment's notice. Dubbed the "Nucleo Basico Eficaz (NBE)," this would give the GOP a rapid response capability for contingencies ranging from terrorist incidents to natural disasters. The MOD is using the NBE as a way of compelling the different services to channel their budget in ways that can sustain joint operations. (Further details septel.)

- Corruption: MOD Wagner has told us that corruption remains the number one problem in the Peruvian military, and recent investigations by the Comptroller's Office bear out his concern. In his view, the Navy has remained relatively professional, but both the Air Force and particularly the Army suffer from high levels of endemic corruption, a situation that will require a generational change in the officer corps before it is resolved.

The MOD's Plan

14. (C) The MOD's plan possesses two key elements. These are:

- Build the capacity to protect national land, air and sea space against non-conventional threats. The MOD has directed his joint chiefs to develop four operational plans. The recently announced "Plan VRAE," is multifaceted interagency approach to combating narcotraffickers and Sendero Luminoso terrorists in the Apurimac and Ene River Valley (VRAE) through better intelligence, targeted security operations, expanding the state's presence with investments in basic transportation, health and education infrastructure in addition to civic campaigns to win over local populations. It will be followed by a similar approach in the Monzon valley, where a second Sendero Luminoso column provides material support to entrenched narcotraffickers. A third plans seeks to enhance GOP presence and control over the Putomayo river border with Colombia to prevent the FARC from using Peru as a logistical, recruiting and R&R base. The fourth plan is to enhance the navy's ability to surveil and patrol waters along Peru's north coast, which is the country's most active transit corridor for cocaine.

- Re-Build Military Capabilities: The Peruvian military has paid a high price for its corruption and politicization during the Fujimori years. During the Paniagua and Toledo governments, its budget was severely slashed even as the Armed Forces had to become an all-volunteer force. By 2004, up to 98 cents of every budget dollar went to fixed obligations (salaries, food, utilities) leaving little for maintenance and operational training. Much of Peru's equipment is composed of dated and poorly maintained Soviet materiel. The critical loss of capabilities was underlined when an armed militant group tookover the provincial town of Andahuaylas in January 2005; no military transport aircraft were operational so troops had to be rushed to the area in the President's plane. MOD Wagner has a commitment for USD 650 million over five years to rebuild capability. This money will be directed to "joint capabilities" (transport, special forces, helo airlift) that can respond to terrorist incidents, Andahuaylas-type uprisings and natural disasters.

What the MOD Will Raise

15. (C) The MOD will raise the following two issues with Washington interlocutors:

- An EDA Waiver: To combat narcotrafficking and enhance its maritime control capabilities, Peru wants a waiver from American Servicemen's Protection Act (ASPA) limits on Excess Defense Articles sought by its navy. We have explained to the Minister that this is not possible under current policy. It is in the U.S. interest, however, that Peru enhance its maritime control capabilities.

- MOD Wagner will also restate the recent GOP offer to allow U.S. surveillance aircraft to have access to an airfield in northern Peru in the face of our likely loss of access to the Manta Cooperative Security Location (CSL). Wagner told the Ambassador on March 21 that he believes the U.S. and Peru should discuss what such use might entail before putting a name (FOL or CSL) or entering into specific negotiations. (See Ambassador's recommendations in Ref B).
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